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MEMORANDUM

November 12, 1973

TO: The Ambassador

FROM: POL - Paul H. Kreisberg *PK*

SUBJECT: India's Attitude Toward the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)

The attached airgram reports that Rikhi Jaipal, India's Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at Vienna believes there may be increased Indian interest in the NPT. Jaipal's reasons, with our comments, are listed below.

(a) India (except for a few diehards) realizes it can't spend the money for sophisticated delivery systems even if it developed a nuclear weapons capability;

(b) There is no serious Indian interest in developing an indigenous capability for India's own peaceful nuclear explosives.

Comment: Jaipal, whether intentionally or not, avoided reference to the hard core of hawkish sentiment in India for leaving open the option of developing a nuclear strike force. Although the great and increasing cost of a convincing nuclear deterrent may have led some Indian strategists to wonder whether this would ever be a sensible option, it has not undercut politically relevant interest in the nuclear option. Mrs. Gandhi's Government has contained this political problem by emphasizing India's interest in an indigenous peaceful nuclear explosive capability while eschewing interest in nuclear weapons. It is highly unlikely that in the face of the small but vocal get-the-bomb-lobby the Indian Government will now begin to evince disinterest even in peaceful nuclear explosions.

The Indian Government holds off pressures to go ahead with a peaceful nuclear explosion by pointing out, inter alia, that progress in useful economic applications of such explosions has been slow. This is true. The US (and the NPT) do not recognize a difference between a so-called peaceful-nuclear-explosive-device and a bomb.

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(c) The Canadian refusal (because India is not a party to the NPT) to export certain key items for the Madras reactor has set back the Madras program three to four years. Our Ambassador at Vienna gathered that the problem of more difficult access to foreign nuclear technology and equipment purchases was becoming a major concern of the Indian Government which was coming to realize that failure to ratify the NPT was adding to the difficulties of bringing nuclear power to reality.

Comment: Perhaps some Indians are starting to recognize that the NPT is beginning to bite non-parties right where it was intended to. (Article III [2] says that no NPT Party will provide fissionable material or equipment for making or processing it to any non-nuclear-weapon state unless the fissionable material will be under safeguards. The Madras project is not safeguarded.) However, we have detected no indications that India is reconsidering its position on the NPT in light of the Canadian decision or difficulties with its nuclear energy program.

(d) The only outstanding concern of the GOI with respect to the NPT was Article VI -- nuclear disarmament. Real progress in carrying out Article VI of the NPT might offer the opportunity for a change in GOI policy toward ratification.

Comment: This is nonsense. The basic concern of the GOI with the NPT is that it is discriminatory; that it divides the world permanently into nuclear powers that count and non-nuclear-weapon states that don't; that it offers no solid guarantee against nuclear blackmail of non-nuclear-weapon states; that non-nuclear-weapon **states** have to help finance their own **safeguards**; that even though the Treaty promises full peaceful benefits of nuclear explosions to the non-nuclear-weapon states, the only way to really get these benefits is to develop the technology yourself; etc., etc.

The purpose of Article VI was to give the impression of more balanced Treaty obligations by committing the nuclear power parties to nuclear disarmament. The US and USSR claim they are doing all they can in this regard through SALT. Others point out that the nuclear arms race charges ahead. The dynamics of those counterclaims extend well beyond the framework of the NPT. Saying you won't become a party to the NPT until there is progress on Article VI can be equivalent to saying you have no intention of becoming a party.

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Article VI obliges the NPT Parties to continue negotiations on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament. There have been no such negotiations since 1964-65 and we have no interest in resuming them. It took us five years to get the Soviets off that wicket and into serious arms control discussions. The Indians, as they became aware that we and the Soviets in our dedication to arms control were cooking up an NPT to bite the non-nuclear-weapon states, became the most vociferous supporters of work on a general and complete disarmament treaty, i.e., a debating exercise. It was specifically to entice India that we stuck the reference to negotiations on such a Treaty into Article VI of the NPT. But they were not enticed.

(e) It might be wise to invite certain non-parties to the NPT, such as India, to attend the NPT Review Conference as observers.

Comment: The NPT calls for a review conference of parties to the Treaty five years after its entry into force. The NPT entered into force in March 1970 so the review conference should be in '75. The idea of inviting non-parties as observers is likely to be given careful consideration (by the US and USSR in the first instance) next year. If you invite some it is difficult not to invite all UN members. This would include the more hysterically anti-NPT countries (like Brazil) who would throw all the sand they could into the gears. People in Washington will remember that India's role in the NPT negotiations was unhelpful in terms of US objectives and will be quite suspicious about what India would try to do at the review conference. (Secretary Trivedi, then the Indian negotiator, was a real thorn for us.) On the other hand, we may well want to include some of our allies who are signatories to the Treaty but not yet parties. In any event, this issue will be decided later in light of a broad complex of NPT issues. We see nothing we can add from here about the merits of inviting India and others.

Having brushed aside so much of what Jaipal said, we remind ourselves that any serious indications of a changed or evolving Indian attitude toward the NPT would be of great interest to Washington. We intend to follow up in our contacts here to see whether we can detect any changes. We will also be working on an in-house review of developments in India's nuclear program and in attitudes toward that program to see whether we have anything worth telling to Washington.

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This subject has been chewed over and over in recent years -- particularly in 1972 when the Japanese touched off a rumor that the Indian blast was just a month or two away. We have noted no changes in Indian policy statements on nuclear issues but have dutifully reported all such statements. Nor have we noted any significant changes in the undercurrents of popular or official attitudes. Even so, we think that toward the end of the year it may be useful to send in a report -- even if it were just to signal to Washington that indeed there has been no change.

POL:RLMcGowanack/mmm
11/12/73